

HIDDEN POISON AND BODY OF ERROR (2)

An editorial by Reuel Lemmons, in Firm Foundation, Sept. 10, 1963 P. 578

[Page 171]

The next installment of Carl Ketcherside's "Answer to Objections" appears elsewhere in this issue. Read it, then this.

4. "He teaches that every sincere believer in the Messiahship of Jesus is a child of God, whether he is ever baptized or not, and is now his brother or sister in prospect."

Brother Ketcherside says "this statement is not true." Yet here is a direct quotation from Brother Ketcherside taken from a California unity meeting: "I regard every sincere conscientious person on the face of the earth who believes in Jesus as the Son of God as God's child and my brother in prospect. He is God's child because he has been begotten by my Father, but he has not been born into the family relationship yet . . . so he is my brother in prospect and God's child by the begetting process." This is the quotation that made us level the charge. According to this direct quotation from him, Brother Ketcherside must accept as God's child every person who sincerely believes in the Messiahship of Jesus whether baptized or not. In one sense nearly every sinner is a child of God in prospect—that is, there is a possibility of his later being born into the family of God.

He bases his contention on I John 5:1, but he makes the mistake of making the word "believeth" to mean simply the act of believing. He would say in last week's article that it had also an additional meaning which includes obedience. His dodge on 1 John 5:1 is just that. If the word is used here to mean simple faith in the Messiahship, then the use of the same word in the same sense last week would include in "the fellowship" believers of all sorts regardless of whether they had obeyed the Lord. 1 John 3:9 says these "begotten" ones do no sin . . . and cannot sin. Does K agree? Since all who are God's children have the Holy Spirit, and in the above quotation K says every sincere person on the face of the

[Page 172]

earth who believes "is God's child and my brother in prospect," let us ask, Does such a believer have the Holy Spirit before he is baptized? The dilemma is his.

5. "Brother K teaches that there must be diversity of belief among God's people in order for them to have unity." He replies, "I do not teach any such thing." In the very next sentence he says, "... but I do teach that to have unity it must be a unity in diversity." This is an example of how the poison is hidden. Note that he says "no other kind of unity is possible." Though he rebukes sectarianism his writings increase the thing he detests. While he talks unity, he gives the nod of approval to all who are divided. Cutting down the sectarian tree with one hand and watering its roots with the other is not a consistent way to get rid of the evil fruit. While we agree that there may be a diversity of opinion and yet unity, we do not agree that the wide

degree of diversity advocated by the brother is permissible. In matters where diversity of opinion leads no one to sin, unity may be possible, but in matters where diversity leads to sin there can be no unity. Yet this is the very area in which K contends for unity. Herein lies the poison.

6. "Brother K refuses to deal with the verb form of fellowship." Please note that his objection to the verb is on the grounds that it is an Americanism. He admits the existence of a verb form in Phil. 4:15; Eph. 5:11; Phil. 4:14. In making a sophisticated play on the form of the verb he attempts to escape the devastating force of the fact that he has said, "Fellowship is a relationship sustained to and with persons, not to things, or to ideas." That this is obviously wrong is evidenced by Phil. 4:14 and 1 Tim. 5:22, and more than a dozen other passages in the N. T. Incidentally Brother Ketcherside himself slips occasionally into the common usage of the Americanism, saying, "Christ does not fellowship us because of what we are, but because of what he is." And that in the Missionary (sic) messenger! Brother K will have to clean up the sheet!

7. "His idea that error in doctrine, except for that of the antiChrist should never cause us to break fellowship puts him in opposition to Gal. 1:6-9 and Eph. 5:3-12. If God breaks fellowship with those who preach another gospel (or doctrine) why should not we? The latter passage excludes from heaven those who practice covetousness, envy, jealousy and such like."

Please note that Brother Ketcherside here would contrast the gospel Paul preached only with a gospel that did not include the deity of Jesus. Then he says that we enter into the fellowship by a belief of that gospel (of the deity of Jesus). Brother Ketcherside, Roman Catholics, Methodists and all others in the entire "Christian world" have believed the gospel of the deity of Jesus. Have they therefore entered that fellowship? You cannot sidetrack the issue by trying to call attention to minor human opinions. Please note that no answer was given to Eph. 5:3-12 except possibly the affirmation that we should not break fellowship over things that God has said will exclude from heaven. This is where the poison is hidden. If God breaks fellowship with my brother because of his practices (Eph. 5:3-12) and I refuse to break fellowship with him with whom God has broken fellowship, then God will break fellowship with me.

8. "He teaches sectarianism is sin (which is true), but then urges complete fellowship of sectarians."

Please note that Brother K teaches that people enter the fellowship by belief of the gospel, which gospel does not include baptism. Remember, he says that baptism is no part of the gospel. Since baptism, according to him, is not a part of the gospel, and since it is by belief of the gospel that people enter the fellowship, then there is no way to escape the conclusion that he urges complete fellowship with sectarians (if by "sectarians" is meant the unimmersed). If the term is used to apply to sectarians in the body (which is the only correct usage of the term) then he does not deny the charge, but rather freely admits it. He says, "I am not in fellowship with God's children who may be in the Baptist party because they are Baptists,

for I am not a Baptist." This is not the point at all. Our charge was that he urges complete fellowship of sectarians. This he freely agrees to. Brother K, we are not talking about you being a sectarian, but rather your fellowship of sectarians. Our point is that your doctrine advocates the fellowship of sectarians. While he deplores sectarianism he advocates fellowship with sectarians. Furthermore he urges sectarians to stay where they are. We repeat he has nothing in common with the Campbells in this respect. Campbell did help to provide something in which all sectarians could be united. He did not urge them to stay in sectarianism and work where they were as "concerned ones" but urged them to come out of sectarianism and be united in one body.

Here is the poison of it all: The trouble is Brother Ketcherside has a far more liberal view of the essentials than the rest of us have. To him our manner of worship is unessential, so instrumental music makes no real difference. To him the church cannot be located anyway, so what difference does it make if premillennialists teach that the church is an accident, that the kingdom has not been established, that Christ is not reigning, that these are not the last days and that there will be another chance?

Neither does he believe the sects are dangerous. He believes that one may "affiliate himself with something" besides the church and be "a Christian in an organization God does not sanction." He is no longer afraid of the apostasy of the church; he rather charges that we all have apostatized. He is no longer afraid of being swallowed up by sectarianism but freely teaches that any and all of us can be in "strange sectarian thickets" and should stay there, rather than come out of them. But you'll have to agree with Shakespeare who said, "You may as well admit, that's a valiant flea who dare eat his breakfast on the lip of a lion."
